

NSC BRIEFING

22 January 1959

YEMEN

- I. Crown Prince Badr (main proponent of close relations with Sino-Soviet bloc) and Soviets have sought to sabotage US-Yemen agreement on wheat aid.
 - A. US offered initially to provide 15,000 tons of wheat, based on best Yemeni estimate of maximum port unloading capacity.
 1. Acting on verbal approval of the ailing, capricious Imam in early Jan, US moved quickly to get first shipment under way for arrival in early Feb because of great need in Yemen.
 - B. Soviet charge, on hearing of pending US-Yemen agreement, persuaded Badr last week [REDACTED]
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 1. While Badr took to his bed for four days, Soviet charge sought and obtained Moscow's approval to offer 10,000 tons of wheat, also for delivery in early February, and Badr obtained Imam's agreement to accept Soviet as well as US aid.
 2. The US agreement is still not signed (though first shipment is already on ship) and US CONSUL Crawford estimates chances of getting authorization sent soon for signature at 50-50.
 - C. Soviets (who had bumper wheat crop and have pulled similar stunt in Afghanistan) already spreading rumors in Yemen belittling size of US offer in relation to need, and are expected to persuade Badr to sign larger agreement soon.

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II. Performance typical of current chaotic drift in Yemen.

A. Imam, in attempting to play off US against bloc, seeks all he can get without regard for obligations.

- 1. Saudis, Czechs, Chinese Communists, and possibly Soviets unable collect installments due.**
- 2. Yemen govt broke, seeking get new loan from Kuwait.**
- 3. Since 1955, bloc military and economic credits to Yemen approximate \$65 million.**
- 4. Probably 250-300 Sino-Soviet bloc technicians now in Yemen.**

B. Badr, whose claim to succession is not recognized by patrician tribal chiefs who traditionally elect each new Imam, has promoted Bloc military and economic aid in hope of improving his succession chances.

- 1. With Imam increasingly ineffective and widespread opposition verging on rebellion, Badr has begun in recent weeks arresting potential opponents to his succession of charges of plotting against govt.**

C. Egyptians nominally support Badr's succession, but also grant asylum in Cairo for antimonarchial Yemeni exiles, who may ultimately be aided in ousting monarchy.

- 1. Trend in Nasir's relations with Communists suggests that Bloc-Egyptian rivalry in Yemen will increase.**

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